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ABSTRACT

The question posed by this paper is: How can a teacher preparation program (TPP) guide participants in the critical area of career planning, which is also important to the profession? The aim of this article is to describe the structure of a proposed special career planning course, in light of the relevant areas in current practice and the participants' goals. Among the relevant areas are the expanding field of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and the special role of English. A distinction is made between accepting a job to satisfy immediate needs and accepting a job as part of career planning in pursuit of continued progress to meet long-term goals. The information provided includes the major trends and areas of specialization in TESOL as well as current issues and concerns. At the same time, participation in professional activities is stressed. With these features combined, the course not only enhances the participants' motivation and sense of direction, but also ensures a smooth transition from the world of theory to the climate of the market place and from the present apprenticeship to future professional involvement. (AB)

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Career Planning in the Teacher Preparation Program (TPP)

Introduction

From the perspective of the participant in a teacher preparation program (TPP), there is perhaps nothing more serious or motivating than the issue of finding a job. For this reason, according to the TESOL certification *Guidelines* (1975), the institution should provide "directed teaching practice ... in situations appropriate to the student teacher's employment goals". However, while some of the TPP participants may be clear about their immediate employment goals, many of them start thinking about jobs only toward the completion of their course work or even after graduation. It is not uncommon for TESOL graduates to look for whatever is available ready to accept an offer without any consideration of its relevance to future plans.

In a field where planning is crucial, this lack of career planning cannot be justified and may unnecessarily lead to frustration not to mention the waste of time and talent involved. Furthermore, the TESOL *Statement of Core Standards* (1982), refers to the steps "to assure awareness of changing needs" and indeed there is a great deal that the typical TPP provides in terms of theory and practice related to the participants' needs, but, as far as the issue of career planning is concerned, the participants are left entirely on their own. The question, then, is: How can the TPP guide the participants in this critical area which is also important to the profession?

Aim and Scope

To provide such guidance, a special course in career planning is proposed. The aim of this article is to describe the structure of the course in light of the relevant areas in current practice and the participants' goals. Among the relevant areas are the expanding field of TESOL and the special role of English. A distinction is made here between accepting a job to satisfy immediate needs and accepting a job as part of career planning in pursuit of continued progress to meet long-term goals.

The proposed course is not designed to determine what the participants should choose but rather to stimulate their thinking along the process of making an informed decision. Such a process can

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be achieved through proper advising and guided peer interaction that is based on an adequate understanding of the changing trends in TESOL and on the feedback from graduates in the field.

Current Practice in Guiding Career Planning

Let us first take a look at the current role of the typical TPP in guiding career planning by examining some relevant areas. At present the TPP provides advising regarding the requirements, the research procedures and the training. The question of career development is seldom, if at all, systematically addressed. What the program offers in this regard as an optional service is often limited to the dissemination of job information in the form of posted lists of announcements received from organizations and other institutions. No attempt is made to guide the participants in evaluating the information with reference to their long-term goals. Such job information, while useful for satisfying immediate needs, in itself can be confusing or even misleading. (I recall the case of of a young graduate who rather naively used the information to apply for a job in Japan with some unfortunate results.)

Another area in the TPP that seems appropriate for discussing career planning is the Methods class which by its very nature invites thinking about jobs and career. However, the fact is that here the focus is almost entirely on the immediate application of techniques and approaches in practice with hardly any attention to the discussion of how this relates to career planning.

Similarly, TESOL textbooks, even those used in the Methods class, may simply make passing reference to the increasing demand for practitioners in the field but with no guidance for future direction.

What about the role of TESOL? There is no doubt that TESOL helps with job information dissemination by notices in its journals and newsletters, by periodical announcements and by special kits such as *Making a Career Choice* and *Teaching EFL Outside the United States.* It also makes the employment fair part of its annual convention. Recently, and that is significant, the career-counseling sessions that were offered by the Committee on Professional Standards beginning with TESOL '91 "were solid booked" as reported by *TESOL Matters* , 1 (6):1. However, valuable as these sessions and publications may be, they cannot substitute for what the TPP can offer over a longer period of time.

Another relevant area is the feedback from graduates in the field occasionally through surveys but more often informally by word of mouth as impressions describing the job market and how the work experience has been satisfying or otherwise. The graduates usually indicate where their training has helped or failed them in their jobs. Such feedback, if effectively utilized, can contribute toward an understanding of at least what to seek and what to avoid. As Johnson (1985:74) points out in her survey of graduates of Bilingual Education, "The data regarding positions held by graduates and the responsibilities of these positions provide one source of information for evaluating the content of training programs".

The data can also serve as feedback to be considered by the TPP participants in setting their goals. For example, one survey concludes that "One in four M.A. graduates becomes, less than three years after graduation, an ESOL administrator, so training in administrative skills, may represent an important omission in the training in TESOL candidates." (Ochsner1980:206). Another survey reports that in addition to teaching, there are other duties in this order of frequency: materials preparation, curriculum design and administration (Day 1984:112). Naturally, the surveys must be considered in their time context.

The TPP Participants' Goals and Interests

All the areas discussed so far are sources of information that is likely to influence the TPP participants' choices and above all their goals and interests which are central to the process of career planning. To understand these goals and interests, one must be aware of the various types of participants. There are resident vs international, native vs nonnative and experienced vs inexperienced participants.

Furthermore, the participants' orientation has changed. Over the years, I have noticed the change taking place and in some cases "the orientation shifting from that of joyous crusaders to skeptical businessmen" to use Leshan's words in criticizing the field of psychology (Leshan 1990:7). I have seen some coming for pure personal satisfaction in helping others and then gradually becoming involved in the struggle for recognition and equality. Some have TESOL as their first choice but some come from other fields .

How and why do they choose TESOL? On the surface, the choice may be initially because of a friend or a relative. (In our program I had brothers and mothers and daughters.) From another perspective,

interests, as indicated by applicants, include cultural understanding, travel and missionary work. Some want part-time work while others seek full-time employment. It is interesting to note that according to one survey, 37% of the graduate respondents indicate they had no clear reason for pursuing the M.A. in TESOL (Ochsner 1980:200).

However, it has been my experience that, between the time the participants enter the program and the time they graduate, they tend to acquire new interests and modify their goals in varying degrees. This is one strong reason why the TPP is the proper time and place to guide these prospective members of the profession in the process of identifying their short-term and long-term goals relative to planning their careers. Even in the case of international students, whose sponsoring governments often limit their plans, every effort should be made to encourage them to explore those TESOL areas that can best satisfy their interests and the needs of their countries. Such encouragement should be part of the guidance systematically provided to all the participants throughout the TPP.

TESOL as an Expanding Field

The participants' interests and goals can be enhanced by their awareness of TESOL as an expanding field. During the short history of TESOL as a professional organization, the growth of the areas of interest and specialization has been steady, if not phenomenal. For instance, over the last decade the number of interest groups has increased from twelve (12) to at least seventeen (17). More significant perhaps is the dramatic increase in membership. According to H.B. Allen's survey, *Tenes*, (1966:34) just before the inception of TESOL, "Two thirds of all teachers report no membership in any relevant association".

Since 1966, the field has been dynamic and constantly expanding. Discussing the growth of TESOL in its first twenty years, James E. Alatis (1987:19) points out that "In 21 years, with 11,000 members [compared with 9,430 three years earlier and about 22,000 today], 66 affiliates [compared with 42 affiliates six years before and 77 today], a large and highly professional convention, a respected journal and newsletter, it has established its position in the language profession and the world of professional associations."

While teaching has remained as the core of TESOL, new areas of specialization that can be pursued separately have emerged, e.g. program administration, computer programming and materials development. Even teaching itself can be classified into more

specialized types according to level, skill and content so that now you may have, for example, a college level reading specialist in business.

Furthermore, the impact of technology on TESOL has been profound in both expanding the field and facilitating its techniques. In teaching the emphasis has shifted from the listening lab to the interactive computer and in testing computeriszed adaptive testing is being developed (Stansfield 1986). Although there is still a wide gap between methodology and technology, specialists are gradually trying to bridge the gap.

The Role of English

Another factor contributing to the expansion of TESOL is the role of English which is assuming unprecedented importance in world communication, business, science and education. As a result, many varieties of English or "Englishes" have emerged, a phenomenon that touches on the notion of native vs nonnative speakers. Seventeen years ago, Kachru (1976:224) discussed "Third World Englishes" and the "wrong attitudes on the two sides of the Atlantic". Since then, the attitudes have dramatically, though perhaps reluctantly, changed. In a recent article, H.D. Brown (1991: 250) states a point taken from Kachru in these words:

> We are witnessing a trend toward more and more *nonnative* speakers of English playing a major role in the global teaching of and spread of English. Already most EFL teachers in the world are nonnative speakers.

A similar view is expressed by a British writer who describes Kachru's 1985 analysis of the categories of English as "one of the most perceptive statements":

> The use of English for disinterested scientific , technological, and commercial interaction becomes more widespread: The language develops creatively within other cultures so that new literatures in English emerge not subservient to the Anglo-Saxon past, and the role of the native-speaking countries in its promotion is changing." (Bowers 1986:402).

It is worth noting that the change is also acknowledged by other writers. In a recent book, *Images of English* , Richard W. Bailey (1991:1-2) puts it this way:

> Present-day English bids fair to become a universal world language; present-day English is a minority language shrinking proportionately with explosive population

growth in nonanglophone countries and a stable or declining birthrate in traditionally English-speaking nations.

The interesting thing is that while asserting the importance of their national languages, many countries at the same time recognize the value of promoting the use of English even though they may be politically hostile to England or the United States. As Pride (1982:1-2) points out, "...the language had to be politically neutralized, so far as possible... English... has largely come to be accepted as a fact of life."

But the influence of politics has led to fluctuations in the TESOL job market as clearly demonstrated in the case of Iran and China when one closed its doors and the other opened them to English teachers. It is important for the participants to be aware of these fluctuations and their impact on the job market in the US as well as abroad. For example, international student enrollment in US colleges has been increasing over the years but at different rates for the different countries. Thus in1992, according to the ESL in Higher Education *Newsletter*, 12 (1):2, of the total 419,585 international students Asians account for 60% with China first followed by Japan, Taiwan and India. On the other hand, with the end of "the cold war", there is now more demand for English in Eastern Europe. The implication for the TPP participants is to be flexible and prepared with alternatives in developing their plans.

The Proposed Course in Career Planning

From the points discussed so far, it will be clear that the building blocks of a course in career planning can be drawn with some modification from elements and services provided by the current TPP and the TESOL organization. While the structure of such a course may vary in some respects from one program to another, the following six basic components are likely to be similar.

1- Study of TESOL as an Organization and as a Profession

First the participants need to have a good understanding of the TESOL organization, its history and structure. TESOL textbooks (for TPP participants) seldom, if at all, provide adequate information in that respect. For example, one textbook, Croft's *Readings* (1980), devotes less than a page to this topic in the Introduction where the author refers to the number of affiliates (42) and membership (more than7,500). He then quotes TESOL's constitution " ...to promote

scholarship, to disseminate information, to strengthen at all levels instruction and research in the teaching of standard English to speakers of other languages and dialects..." This is useful but not adequate information.

To be adequate and helpful, the information should be considered from the perspective of the TPP participants with a focus on the trends and patterns in the job market and the expanding areas of specialization. At the same time attention should be paid to the study of the organization and its role in setting professional standards and promoting the interests of the membership.

As the participants become aware of the services and benefits provided, they should be encouraged or even required to be actively involved in the professional conferences and publications on the local as well as the national levels. For instance, attending a national convention, with the proper orientation, can be a worthwhile experience that they can discuss and share with their peers.

2- Goals and Interests

Once the participants have acquired a good knowledge of TESOL as an organization and as a profession through this course and other TPP courses, they should examine their goals and interests in light of that knowledge. Perhaps a diagnostic test can be eventually developed to aid in identifying dominant interests. As indicated earlier, while exploring the field of TESOL through reading and discussion, the participants' goals are likely to be influenced. They may add to their interests and modify their short-term and long-term goals in an attempt to take the appropriate steps based on their understanding of their potential and the opportunities in the field.

3- Framework for Examining Options

In the process of setting their goals, the participants should be guided in developing a framework for examining options and alternatives, for evaluating job information, and for asking the appropriate questions to help clarify issues. The process implicitly assumes a strong interest and a certain degree of commitment on their part in pursuing the field.

To develop the appropriate framework, the following points are suggested for discussion:

a- The desirability of certain kinds of experience in certain areas of TESOL in the United States and abroad.

b- Types of jobs to enhance the experience sought
c- Time limitations and financial aspects
d- Degree of satisfaction with the work and its environment
e- Opportunities for flexibility, creativity, change and advancement
f- Facilities for work and relevant research
g- Required qualifications and formal credentials (vs. experience)

These points may be expanded or modified and perhaps rated on a scale in light of priorities and goals.

One way to help reduce confusion in dealing with the accumulating job information, is to organize it according to areas of interest and specialization before applying the appropriate criteria for evaluation.

4-Advising, Peer Interaction and Feedback

The process of goal identification and job information evaluation can be further guided through proper advising in individual conferences and through peer interaction in group discussions. Those with the same major interests may form small groups to discuss their ideas in light of selected readings and feedback from graduates in the field with a focus on a specific area of specialization and then share their thoughts with the larger group.

5-Inspiring Careers and 'Gurus'

It is also suggested that within each area of specialization, some examples of successful professionals or "gurus" should be studied in context to help understand the steps followed and the challenges met in achieving excellence. Such a study, when selected on the basis of the participants' interests, can be both instructive and inspiring.

6-Issues and Concerns

Another important component of the course is the discussion of some of the current issues and concerns facing the profession and the membership. Discussing these issues and concerns, which may be economical, ethical or political, will no doubt contribute toward a realistic understanding of the status of TESOL and what needs to be done by its members. For example, there is the issue of certification: How much has been achieved and how much more can be done? Then there is the problem of credentials: Is the TESOL MA a terminal degree for teaching ESL at the college level? Ethical questions can also be raised: Is there, for instance, a danger of commercialization in recruiting international students? What about ESL credit and the status of ESL instructors? These are only a few examples of the

issues and concerns that the prospective professionals may explore together in light of TESOL efforts and resolutions.

Conclusion

To sum up, in view of the importance of the process of career planning as part of the TPP, a special course is proposed to address that area. While the course draws with some modification on relevant features already in current practice, the emphasis here is placed on systematic guidance by providing the participants with the necessary background information and by stimulating the process of goal clarification through individual advising, peer interaction and feedback from practicing graduates.

The information provided includes the major trends and areas of specialization in TESOL as well as current issues and concerns. At the same time, participation in professional activities is stressed. With these features combined, the course not only enhances the participants' motivation and sense of direction, but also ensures a smooth transition from the world of theory to the climate of the market place and from the present apprenticeship to future professional involvement.

It is important that the components of the course be integrated and coordinated with the other courses in the TPP so that the participants become aware of all the pertinent resources that will enable them to make a meaningful plan and gain insights that can be discussed and shared with their peers. The process involved will help them broaden their view of the profession and motivate them to participate in promoting its activities while developing their own career plans.

Needless to say, the structure of the course in its present form must be practically tested and appropriately modified to fit the program where it is adopted. I am hopeful that others will join in the effort to refine it to accommodate the participants' needs and goals through further research and periodical evaluation.

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